

Design Resource

Ajrakh Printing - Ajrakhpur, Gujarat

An Environment Friendly Tradition Craft
by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Srikanth, Vijay G. and
Shruthi K.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/ajrakh-printing-ajrakhpur-gujarat>



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Introduction

Printing on both sides of the fabric is usually referred to as Ajrakh printing where the name is believed to be originated from the Arabic name Azrak that generally refers to blue. These printed fabrics are usually of blue color with red and white pattern of designs, dyed with indigo and madder. Kutch, district of Gujarat is one of India's leading areas for block printing and dyeing. It is known for its variety of block prints with particular style of techniques is empowered by "Khatris" community.

These fabrics were usually used as turban on the head and as lungis. And are made with several steps of printing and dyeing on them. Ajrakh printing involves many stages of printing and washing the fabric over and over with natural dyes and mordant.

The craftsmen today possess a large range of different motifs and patterns which is passed down to the next generation of the family. The motifs are addressed by particular names that relates to their symbolism such as Dabul (jewel box), badam (almond) and chap (block). Due to awareness in urban people the popularity of craft is slowly increasing because of being an environment friendly tradition craft and attractive patterns. Floral and geometrical designs in the colors of red, blue and black are most well-known in Ajrakh printing, which are traditionally wore by men as lungi, turban and shoulder cloth.

Traditionally Ajrakh cloths are widely used among Meghwals and Ahirs (cattle herders). As per the craftsmen, these fabrics were usually made for the cattle rearing people of the Sindh region as these were worn at the night times when they take their cattle to the forest for grazing. The cattle rearing community preferred these fabrics as it used to protect them from the wild animals due to the blue and green shade of colors. Also, the blue color in Ajrakh printing has the property of keeping warm in winter and cold in summer.



The motif of Ajrakh basically consists of floral and geometrical designs.

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Ajrakh printed clothes are washed in flowing water.

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The fabric is lashed to make the material soft.



Resist printing is the specialty of Ajrakh.

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The makers of Ajrakh believe that the printed fabric has warm and cool colors, which steady the body temperature.



The fabric mainly famous for blue and red shaded fabric.



A cotton saree printed with Ajrakh pattern.

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Bedsread printed with Ajrakh colors.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Tools/ Equipment's used in Ajarkh block printing are:

- Hand carved wooden blocks of different pattern used to print the design on fabric.
- Printing platform made of layers of sponge sheets and cloth.
- Ball pins to fix the cloth to the printing platform.
- Color trays to hold the color solution.
- Vessel to boil and dye the fabric.
- Water tank to wash the fabric.

Materials used in Ajarkh block printing are:

- Cotton cloth called as latha is the basic material used for printing.
- The colors are made from natural ingredients such as iron rods, jaggery, tamarind seed and turmeric powder.
- The clothes are washed with hardae (process) solution i.e. Myrobalan.



Indigo color for blue shade.

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Arabic gum mixed with colors.



Indigo powder.



Tamarind seed powder used in color preparation.



Maddar is used as a dye solution to dye the fabric.

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Wooden designed block used to print design on the fabric.



Iron waste is used to prepare black color.



Red color solution.



Copper vessel used to boil the cloth in dye solution.

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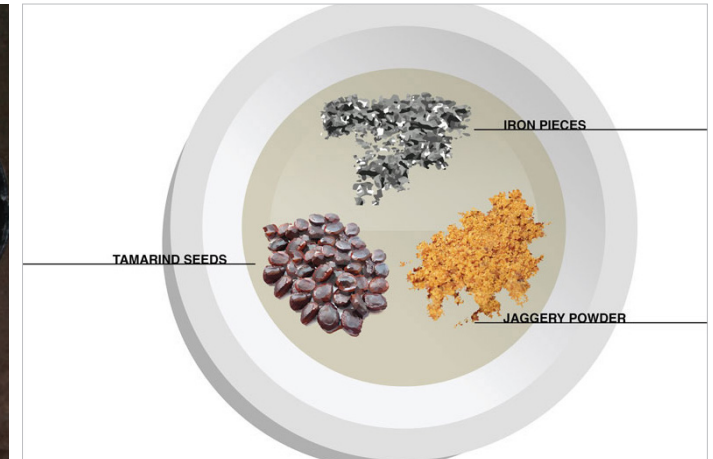
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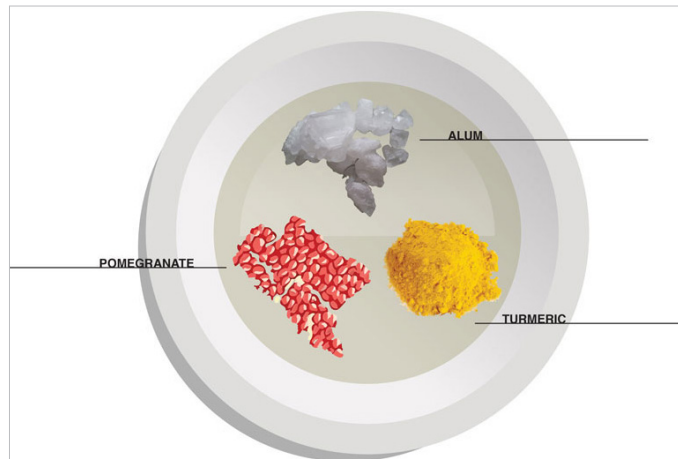
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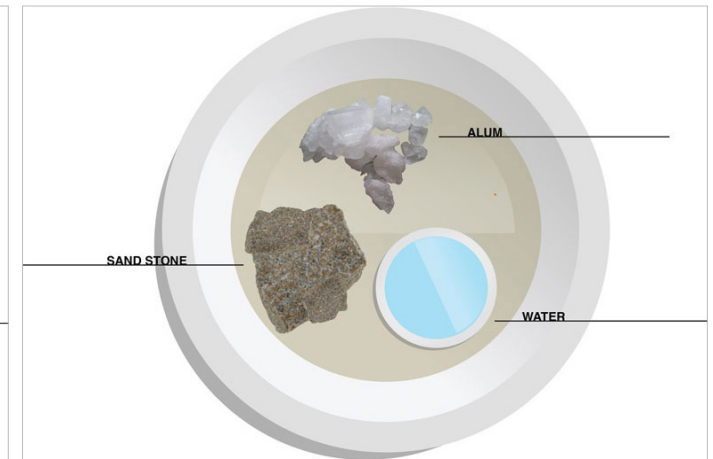
Plain cotton cloth soaked in water.



Ingredient used to make black color print dye.



Ingredients used to make red color print dye.



Ingredients used to make white color print dye.

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Making Process

Ajrakh Block printing undergoes various stages of process of printing and dyeing. The selected cream (any light color) cotton fabric is soaked in water for overnight and lashed with the wooden beater (bat shape wood) in the flowing water to remove the starch content and impurities in the fabric.

Stage 1 (Hardae Process):

To the mixture of 100gms of Hardae powder (Tamarind seed powder) 20 liters of water is added and stirred well for 5 minutes, to which the fabric is soaked for about 5-10 minutes and dried under sunlight.

Stage 2 (White Print):

For white print- Arabic gum and Lime stone (chunna) are stirred well and this mixture can be used for about two days' processes with minimum of two times stirring in a day. To highlight white, cream colors in the blue cloth, it is print with the white mixture. The hardae fabric is spread on the printing table and printed with outline blocks (Rekh) with white print on both sides of the fabric. The white print reserves the areas of the fabric to which it is applied with lime and Arabic gum. The white printed fabric is dried under sunlight for about 15- 20 minutes.

Stage 3 (Black Print):

For black print- Iron and Jaggery mixed with water, kept for about 15 -20 days. This solution is mixed well with the tamarind seed powder and boiled up to 80-90 degree centigrade for about 30 minutes and cooled. The black print mixture is poured in the printing tray, spread evenly and printed with blocks locally called as Kat.

Stage 4 (Red Print):

For red print- 5 liters of water and about 200gms of multani miti is mixed well which is filtered with a piece of cloth. To which 1kg of alum, 2kg of Arabic gum and 100gms of eco-friendly lalkasi (chemical) is added and mixed well. Red color is printed after the fabric is dried with black print.

Stage 5 (Indigo):

For 300gms of indigo powder, 1.5 Hydro's (Sodium dithionite), 100 liters of water is stirred well. The fabric is immersed from one side; the whole fabric is fully immersed in for about 5 to 10 minutes without rinsing.

Stage 6 (Boiled with Aligirin (madir):

213 gms of aligirin is filtered with a piece of cloth in 7 to 8 litres of water in a copper vessel. To which Dhawdaka phul (Pawdas, Rajasthan flower) and indigo dyed fabric is immersed completely and boiled for about 45 minutes. After the above 6 stages, the process to the fabric is done as per the choice of the end product to be obtained. For more of blue color shade meena color method is preferred, for more of greenish blue shade green color method is preferred.

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For Meena Color:

As per the customer's choice, the selection of the printing is done. For more of white, it is printed with white on the red printed areas, for red color to be highlighted the red printed areas are untouched. The dried fabric is immersed in the indigo color from one side, washed and dried under sunlight. The fabric is boiled with aligirin (padwas), dhawdaka phul, washed and dried.

For Green Color:

For 20 litres of water 1kg of pomegranate skin is soaked and boiled which is hot sprayed on to the fabric and dried. A mixture of 20 litres of water 500 grams of turmeric powder is added and boiled which is hot sprayed on the fabric and dried. The fabric is soaked in the alum solution, washed and dried.



White cotton cloth is measured and cut into required length and soaked in plain water for overnight.

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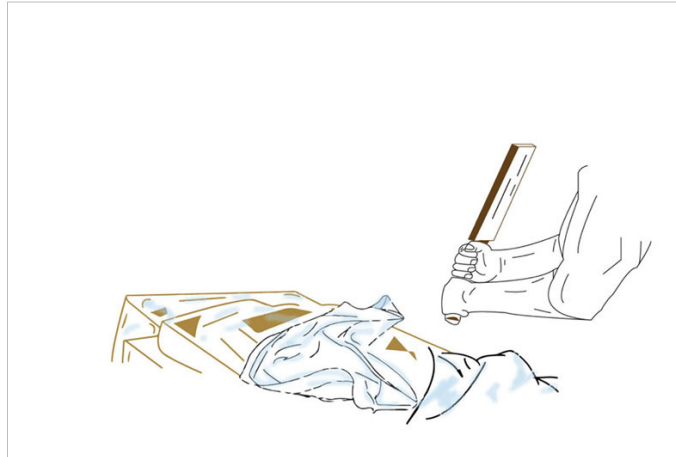
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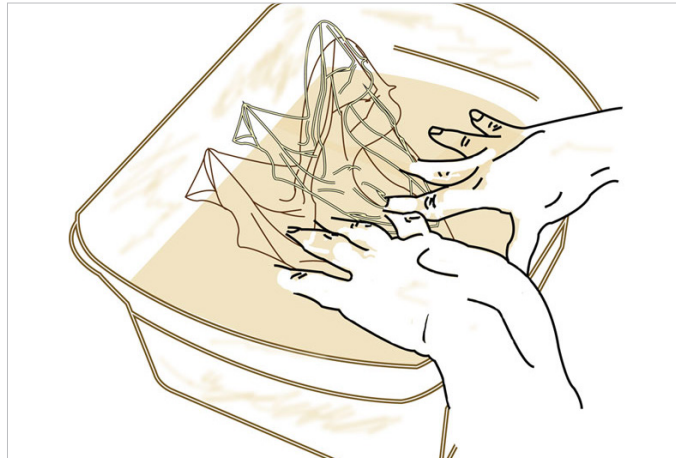
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The soaked cloth is washed in flow water and lashed with wooden bat.



The cloth is soaked in harada (tamarind seed powder) solution and dried under sun.



Cloth is fixed to a platform to begin block printing.

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Dye paint is stored in a dye tray and the wooden blocks are immersed in the dye and printed on the cloth.



Initially border is printed first.

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Newspaper is used to avoid printing on other areas.



Outline of the design is printed first.

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Different block is used to fill the color inside the design.



Printed cloth is washed in plain water.

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The cloth is again washed in flowing water.



The cloth is beaten on the stone slab to remove all impurities.



The washed clothes are spread on the ground and dried under the sun.

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Craftsman fold and takes the dried cloth for indigo dying.



The cloth is dyed in indigo color to get blue shade.



Dyed cloths are again dyed in the solution of aligirin and Dhawdaka phul.

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Dyed clothes dried in the sun and packed for marketing.

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Products

Ajrakh block printed fabric was the integral part of Sindhi culture held with high esteem and extreme respect. These fabrics are recognized with their protective properties to the harsh environment. They are also worn on festive and marriage occasion and even cultural events. The varieties of product are:

- Kammar band (Waist cloth)
- Chadar (Bed spread)
- Rajai (Blanket)
- Salwar Kameez
- Dhoti
- Lungi
- Turban
- Dupatta
- Shawl
- Safa (head covering)
- Malir (skirt fabric)



Printed fabric on which embroidery is also made.

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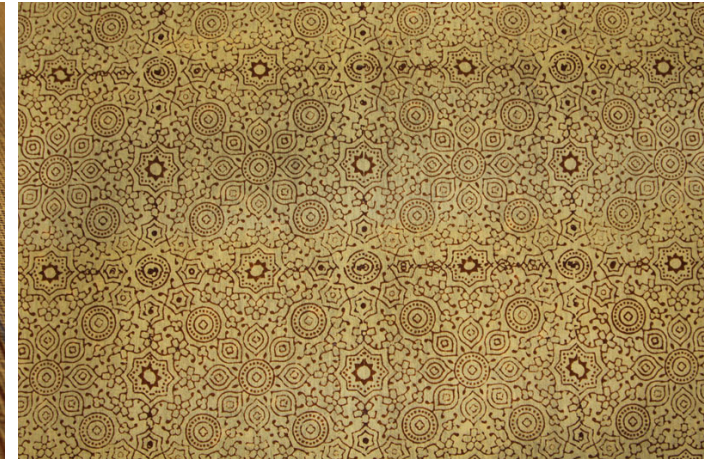
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Ajrakh block printing is mainly designed with floral and geometrical motifs.



For printing red and black color is mainly used.



The same design is printed 2 to 3 times to give a darker shade of color.



Multi-color bedspread designed with floral motifs.

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A saree printed with ajrakh designs and dyed in indigo color.



A simple wall hanging made with ajrakh pattern.



Dupatta printed in ajrakh style.

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Shawls printed with red color print.

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Video



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